24 February 2016

Re: ACST Response - Healthy Tasmania, Five Year Strategic Plan

Aged and Community Services Tasmania (ACST) is the peak body representing aged care providers in Tasmania delivering a diverse range of services including residential care, home care, retirement living, independent living, assessment, health & wellbeing programs, palliative care, dementia care, CALD services and day centres. We represent more than ninety five per cent of providers including not for profit, community, church & charitable, for profit, and state government.

ACST welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the above plan and has chosen to highlight three key areas of activity that we believe will contribute to real outcomes for the health and wellbeing of older Tasmanians -

1. Improving Oral Health Services for Older Tasmanians – a focus on prevention

In Tasmania, we have formed an Aged Services Oral Health Alliance (ASOHA) to improve and systematise the oral health of older Tasmanians. Members of the ASOHA are

- Aged and Community Services Tasmania (ACST)
- Oral Health Services Tasmania (OHST)
- The Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre (WDREC) at the University of Tasmania (UTAS)
- Centre for Research Excellence in Primary Oral Health Care at the University of Tasmania (UTAS)
- Centre for Rural Health (CRH) at the University of Tasmania (UTAS)
- Primary Health Tasmania (PHT)
- Australian Dental Association (ADA-Tasmania).

The initial focus for effort is in the area of prevention in residential aged care facilities (Stage 1) however we have an overall plan that we have agreed upon that will guide our ongoing efforts – this overall plan is attached.

Oral health is essential for physical and nutritional health and quality of life. Oral disease is one of the four most expensive Australian preventable chronic diseases. More and more links are being found between oral and general health. Examples include coronary heart risk, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes mellitus. More than 63,000 Australians are hospitalised each year for preventable dental conditions, and is the highest reason for acute preventable hospital admissions in Tasmania.

A worsening crisis in aged care oral health is occurring in Australia as more and more people designated as high care enter Residential Aged Care Facilities with their natural teeth. As Tasmania has the fastest aging population and the worst adult oral health in Australia, this crisis is hitting Tasmania the hardest.
The table below indicates considerable savings can be made in the acute sector by reducing oral health admissions by using a proactive approach to oral health care in Residential Aged Care Facilities (Stage 1 in the attached plan) and eventually in the community.

**Table 1: Oral health hospital admissions (ICD-10-AM K00-K14) by age group and region in Tasmania, 2010-14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>REGIONS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85+</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have submitted to the Minister and through the current budget processes some costs for the roll-out of this Stage 1 as a comprehensive, state-wide program but also believe that Stage 2 is as critical if we are going to engage in the proactive prevention required in this area. We believe an evaluation of such a project would support the evidence already provided in terms of savings to the overall system. We believe this important collaboration between the Tasmanian aged care, oral health and academic sectors is worthy of support.

2. **Stepping Up & Stepping Out – leadership, innovation, cooperation and service redesign**

Creating a strong and constructive interface between the health and aged sectors will allow for the realisation of significant benefits to flow from the ongoing aged care reform process. The state health system can leverage of the wellness, reablement and restorative focus of the reforms and maximise the benefits for older people whilst taking pressure of the acute system. Collaborative efforts between the State and Commonwealth systems that support common approaches around early intervention, maintenance of independence and a health and wellbeing focus would not only benefit older Tasmanians but also the efficiency of the broader systems. Attached is a paper (full report and summary) developed by our sector to encourage discussion in this area.

3. **Developing Age Friendly Communities**

The Government sponsor a group of key stakeholders to develop further detail around this concept as a key element of keeping older Tasmanians healthy, connected and engaged. The scope of this work could include a project framework and also recommend trial sites/areas for implementation.

Yours sincerely

Darren Mathewson
Chief Executive Officer